100 000 sqm of output a year, 50 000 EUR savings

How a signage department turned into a strategic business unit.

V-TAB of Gothenburg, Sweden, has steadily transformed its business over the past 20 years. While traditional newspaper publishing is on the wane, there is new and prospering business in fields such as large format printing. This is where a Nyala flatbed printer has saved V-TAB tens of thousands in operating costs just as the business unit readies itself to tap new markets.



V-TAB has roots in newspaper publishing. Since its founding in 2002, the company has seen several rounds of restructuring, site closures and merging with another newspaper group. In 2006, V-TAB acquired a site in Norrahammar where its direct mailing and signage departments got started. Signage may have begun as a side-line, but continuous growth led to it being declared a strategic business area in 2016. By 2020, two thirds of the Norrahammar staff worked in signage. The business unit operates a swissQprint Nyala flatbed printer that has output 300 000 square metres in three years of service.

Offerings for retail and grocery stores

V-TAB's signage unit provides indoor and outdoor communication materials to retail and grocery stores, starting with the initial store fit-out and later moving on to promotional

signage. Customers can order brand-neutral items from the V-TAB web shop or opt for printing on demand, where V-TAB integrates the customer's corporate design. V-TAB also helps with concepts and supplies predefined signage packages for new store openings, with sets and sizes of signage elements tuned to the store's dimensions.



Integrated purchase-to-pay process

As an option to the web shop, V-TAB offers integration of signage products into customers' ERP systems. "They get immediate pricing, including shipment cost," says Dan Eriksson, Norrahammar Site Manager and Technical Manager at V-TAB. This is a win-win situation: Customers benefit from a transparent, quick and straightforward purchase process, which keeps them coming back to V-TAB.

Versatile and reliable production

For producing signage and advertising media, V-TAB uses the Nyala as much as possible. "By integrating automated RIP workflows, we run batches of jobs based on a specific material like paperboard," Dan explains. He is fascinated by the range of media that Nyala handles: aluminium, glass, wood, paper, cardboard, plastic and more. "This large format printer lives up to what we had hoped for," Dan says with a smile. "If another machine cannot handle some tricky material, Nyala can." With the roll to roll option and dual roll option on hand, Nyala also processes materials like mesh, vinyl and fabrics as well as wallpaper. In fact, a lot of wallpaper.



50 000 EUR cost savings

Dan stresses the variety of substrates and machine reliability as major benefits. “We are extremely flexible with the Nyala,” he says. Moreover, V-TAB can keep a full check on consumables and maintenance costs. “Ink consumption is 25 percent lower than expected.” Dan appreciates how they can calculate job pricing very accurately and that maintenance time is low and plannable. “We have not had a single technical issue in three years.” V-TAB is saving 50 000 EUR in maintenance cost compared to their previous large format system. “After three years and 300 000 square metres, our Nyala has still got its original print heads,” Dan realises. As a matter of fact, three years used to be the expected lifetime of earlier equipment. “The swissQprint will run at least six more years from now,” Dan believes.

Production speed ≠ print speed

Dan recounts: “Signage used to be handcraft early on, here and now it’s a standardised process.” The operator’s responsibility today is to run and maintain the machine so that it meets production requirements. “We try to streamline and automate processes as much as possible,” Dan says. In newspaper production everything is interlinked – from the paper to logistics. Naturally, V-TAB takes the same approach to large format printing. Dan knows: “Production speed does not equal print speed – it is the workflow that makes the difference.”

Crucial features for competitiveness

“Consistent machine accuracy is crucial for one thing,” Dan points out. Reproductions need to be accurate on every occasion, he says: “And they are with the Nyala flatbed printer.” Also, efficiency-boosters like the swissQprint tandem mode are key. Tandem enables non-stop printing: While Nyala prints on one half of the table, the operator loads the other half

with material. As the printer has a white channel for productions on transparent media, white printing is an integrated process. V-TAB's vision is increased automation, for example transferring material automatically from one machine or workstation to the next. The bottom line for Dan: "All of this makes us more competitive."



Professional support

NIZE equipment of Denmark is the official swissQprint sales and service partner in the Nordic countries. "They provide services beyond that," Dan praises. He is in touch with them every week and feels sure that NIZE's support has contributed to the growth of V-TAB's large format business. "We need to give our customers new ideas, and if we don't have the know-how, we need partners who do," he says.

Expansion plans

The transformation process at V-TAB is ongoing. Instead of producing newspapers and direct mailings, they intend to focus on heat set and commercial printing, as well as on large format printing. It is a move born out of conviction that this is a continuing growth area about to diversify. Dan Eriksson has ideas: "We might approach the packaging industry or become a subcontractor for industrial companies." Building on the existing business model, they are also considering extending the web shop to include B2C offerings in wall decoration and customised signage. "Our integrated processes and automation in production are the enablers," Dan concludes.

Company	V-TAB AB
Website	www.v-tab.se
Segment	Newspaper publishing, direct mailing services, signage
Established	2002
Employees	Group: 335, Norrahammar: 57, signage unit: 34
Printer	Nyala 3
References	Indoor and outdoor communication for large grocery chains and retail groups Subcontracting (design and production) for other signage companies